



STATE OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Coming Tower

The Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza

Albany, New York 12237

Antonia C. Novello, M.D., M.P.H., Dr.P.H.
Commissioner

Dennis P. Whalen
Executive Deputy Commissioner

December 2004

Dear Colleague:

I am seeking your active involvement in efforts to address the escalating use of methamphetamine throughout New York State. This substance, sometimes known as meth, crystal meth, tina or speed, has been associated with the transmission of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). It has the potential to accelerate the spread of these infections if we do not act quickly and intelligently. Gay men and other men who have sex with men (MSM) are currently those most strongly impacted by methamphetamine; growing numbers of heterosexual men and women, including young people, are also using methamphetamine and falling prey to its negative consequences. I urgently request your consideration of the action steps listed below.

What Your Agency/Organization Can Do About Methamphetamine Use HIV/AIDS providers have great potential to intervene against methamphetamine use. Community-based providers can:

- Educate staff about methamphetamine use and its consequences.
- Provide information about methamphetamine use and its consequences to clients.
- Ask about use of all substances, including methamphetamine, at intake.
- Maintain a dialog regarding substance use and its risks with your clients.
- Consider methamphetamine use in design/development of strategies and interventions.
- Incorporate methamphetamine use and its consequences as issues in programming targeting MSM and HIV-positive individuals.
- Make referrals to substance abuse treatment and counseling programs. Many struggling with methamphetamine dependence are also benefitting from the 12-step approach used in Crystal Meth Anonymous (CMA) and similar programs.
 - Information on CMA is available on the Internet at:
 - Crystal Meth Anonymous (<http://crystalmeth.org>)
 - NYC Crystal Meth Anonymous (<http://www.nycma.org> and 212-642-5029)
 - Narcotics Anonymous (NA) services are available regardless of the particular drug or combination of drugs used. NA programs can be found in some local telephone listings and on-line (<http://www.na.org>).

We invite you to share your experiences with us, including:

- the specific impact that methamphetamine use is having on individuals and in your respective communities, including identification of affected populations (i.e., MSM, college students, persons in rural settings, etc), and

- any specific efforts which seem to be effective in educating individuals about or are having a positive impact on changing behaviors related to methamphetamine use.

Knowing your experiences would enable the AIDS Institute to respond in a timely way to maximize public health benefits, to serve as a conduit for sharing best practices regarding combating the impact of methamphetamine use in various populations, particularly as it relates to HIV transmission, and to develop programs that are effective in helping to reduce transmission of HIV that is related to methamphetamine use.

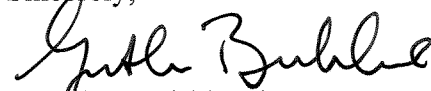
Methamphetamine Use Can Have Serious Health Consequences Research on methamphetamine use suggests a strong association with increased sexual risk behavior. This is true for MSM as well as in heterosexual populations. This risk-taking is resulting in growing numbers of HIV and STD infections. Those methamphetamine users who inject the drug are also placing themselves at risk for other blood-borne infections including hepatitis B and C. Use of methamphetamine during pregnancy can result in premature delivery, abnormal neonatal reflexes and altered behavior patterns. For individuals who are HIV-infected, methamphetamine use can hamper adherence to antiretroviral medications. It can also suppress immune system responses to HIV or other infections, interact with HIV medications and accelerate other HIV-related health problems.

Chronic methamphetamine use carries with it the risk of cardiovascular and neurological damage. Mood disorders, particularly depression, are common consequences of repeated methamphetamine use, and psychoses may develop over time. Methamphetamine is highly addictive, and tolerance for it develops rapidly. Unfortunately, no pharmacological treatments for methamphetamine dependence have yet proven successful. Prescribed medications, including antidepressants, however, are being successfully used to alleviate some of the symptoms of withdrawal. Behavioral counseling and 12-step counseling programs are available as treatment options.

Available Resources Surrounding Methamphetamine A variety of print and other materials about methamphetamine are freely available on the Internet. These are listed on the attached Resource Sheet, together with information about how to locate 12-step programs.

Please consider ways in which you can incorporate information about methamphetamine into your programs and services. We would appreciate your help in assuring that your agency/organization plays an active role in response to the threat of methamphetamine.

Sincerely,



Gutrie S. Birkhead, M.D., M.P.H.
Director, AIDS Institute

Attachment

**New York State Department of Health
AIDS Institute
Resource Sheet: Methamphetamine**

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

NYS Government

New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services

- “Amphetamines and Methamphetamines” at:
<http://www.oasas.state.ny.us/AdMed/drugs/fyimeth.htm>

New York City Government

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

- Health Bulletin “Health Bulletin # 16: Methamphetamine and HIV” at:
<http://www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/doh/html/browse/browse-chemical.html>
- “Methamphetamine: Abuse and Addiction” at:
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/special/methamph.html>

Federal Government

National Institute of Drug Abuse

- “NIDA Research Report - Methamphetamine Abuse and Addiction: NIH Publication No. 02-4210” at: <http://www.nida.nih.gov/ResearchReports/Methamph/Methamph.html>

Office of National Drug Control Policy

- Fact Sheet “Methamphetamine November 2003” at:
<http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/factsht/methamph/index.html>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

- Methamphetamines Quick Facts at:
<http://store.health.org/catalog/facts.aspx?topic=6&h=drugs>
- “Tips for Teens: The Truth About Methamphetamine” at:
<http://www.ncadi.samhsa.gov/govpubs/PHD861/>

U.S. Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration

- “Methamphetamine & Amphetamines” at:
<http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/concern/amphetamines.html>
- “NYS Factsheet” at:
<http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/states/newyorkp.html>

Non-Governmental Organizations

AIDS Community Research Initiative of America

- Community Forum Summary July 2001, Ups and Downs: Party Drugs and HIV Medications at:
http://www.criany.org/print/treatment_edu_forumjuly1101_print.html

Gay Men's Health Crisis

- "Crystal: What you need to know" at:
<http://www.gmhc.org/programs/crystal.html>

The Lesbian Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center

- "Getting Clear About Crystal Meth" at:
<http://www.gaycenter.org/Surveys>

New York AIDS Coalition

- Position Paper "Position Paper: The Crystal Methamphetamine Epidemic And Its Impact on HIV/AIDS Prevention And Treatment" at:
<http://www.nyaidscoalition.org/cgi-bin/iowa/nyac/policy/605.html>

San Francisco AIDS Foundation

- Frequently Asked Questions About Crystal Methamphetamine at:
http://www.sfaf.org/aboutaids/faq_meth.html

University of California San Francisco Center for AIDS Prevention Studies

- "How do club drugs impact HIV prevention?" at:
<http://www.caps.ucsf.edu/publications/clubdrugs.html>

12-STEP PROGRAMS

Crystal Meth Anonymous

- **Crystal Meth Anonymous** at: <http://crystalmeth.org>
- **New York City Crystal Meth Anonymous** at: <http://www.nycma.org> and (212)642-5029

Narcotics Anonymous

- **Narcotics Anonymous** programs can be found in some local telephone listings and on-line at: <http://www.na.org>